Press release

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Met Office scientists at an 'Eve of Kyoto' conference

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Leading scientists from the Met Office will be joined by other world experts at an 'Eve of Kyoto' Conference in Amsterdam between 10 and 13 July. The scientists will be reviewing recent work and discussing the effect of global warming, climate change, carbon cycles and carbon sinks on the future of the planet.

Dr John Mitchell OBE, Dr Howard Cattle, Dr Peter Cox and Dr Richard Betts base their work on the Met Office's Hadley Centre climate simulations. The Hadley Centre is increasingly acknowledged as the leading centre in the world for this type of work.

John Mitchell will be demonstrating how the models represent past, present and furture climate whereas the other three scientists will look at specific issues surrounding climate change.

Peter Cox and his team were the first in the world to include vegetation and carbon cycle feedbacks in a climate prediction model. Their results have shown that these feedbacks could significantly accelerate global warming.

Richard Betts' work, meanwhile, has changed conventional thinking. Planting forests to absorb CO_2 may not slow global warming after all. Forests in snow-covered regions significantly darken the Earth's surface causing more of the sun's energy to be absorbed. The warming effect of this may be greater than the cooling effect of CO_2 absorption.

Finally, Howard Cattle will lead discussions on changes in polar ice caps. The Hadley Centre model predicts that the annual coverage of Arctic sea ice could be halved over the next hundred years. This may lead to changes in ocean circulations, which in turn will have significant effects on the world's climate. It may also have serious consequences for the habitat of wildlife such as polar bears.

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